November 21, 1950

At a meeting last night in the Secretary’s office, he discussed in some detail the current situation in Korea and analyzed the problem along the following lines. He said there were four parts of this analysis:

(1) We should see whether General MacArthur has been told very clearly what to do and whether this is within his capabilities.

(2) We should examine the effect of various courses on the probability of bringing on general hostilities and war.

(3) What is the area of political adjustment and what are the pluses and minuses with regard to them.

(4) What is the effect of the general military posture of the United States and does this require change in policies.

With regard to (1) above, the Secretary said there was a possibility of some confusion in General MacArthur’s mind because he has a straight military directive from the Joint Chiefs of Staff and also has general orders sent from the United Nations. On a straight military basis, he was told to pursue the forces north of the 38th and destroy them as a military force. If the Chinese appeared, he was to continue the mission until it was evident he could not succeed. The Secretary felt that no one should change this part of the directive until General MacArthur had had a chance to “probe” the situation. The Secretary said that the civil affairs directive may have affected General MacArthur’s interpretation of the military directive. He referred particularly to that portion on occupation. He said that the civil affairs directive does confuse and does not take into consideration the contingency of the Chinese communists coming in, as does the military directive. The Secretary said we must talk to the Joint Chiefs of Staff about this and clear up any misunderstanding, if one exists. We must point out that we are not interested in “real estate” but in an army.
With regard to (2) above, we are unable to answer this question until after General MacArthur has had a chance to "probe". There are several things which bear on the question. Sir Oliver Frankes mentioned to the Secretary yesterday that the entire history of this part of the world indicates a concern over Korea as an entrance to Manchuria. Sir Oliver had mentioned that the Russians, the Japanese, and the British had all had this concept. If this is true, the Secretary said this led to some understanding of the concern which Russia and the Chinese communists might have over the use of Korea as a main highway. He said that he doubted that the communists believed that the United States would use Korea in that way but that their fear may relate to propaganda on the rearming of Japan. The Secretary said this might lead you to believe that there is more sensitivity here than the intelligence reports seem to indicate. He said this sensitivity had some bearing on the immediate situation but more on the long-range situation. If General MacArthur is successful in defeating the Chinese and driving them across the river, the situation might ease and he could let the Republic of Korea take over the border areas. If the Chinese were badly licked, it might reduce the chance of general war. However Chinese communist forces cannot be destroyed in Korea. If, on the other hand, strong resistance is met and we find that there is inevitably to be a long struggle, we must turn again to the field of negotiation and the sensitivity becomes even more important.

With regard to (3) above, this will take time. It will not be done quickly. If resistance is strong, the idea of a negotiated settlement and a quick withdrawal is impossible. We must have forces either in Korea or in Japan for some time on the assumption that the Chinese communists could continue to cause trouble. The idea of a militarized zone is merely another way of saying that the Chinese communists will occupy that territory. The zone, nevertheless, has certain advantages in that it will permit a cooling down of the situation. It recognizes that there will be a dangerous frontier there for some time to come.

With regard to (4) above, in our judgment the maintenance of stability and peace requires that we be in the Far East longer with
more forces than we had expected. This will not necessarily mean "forever" but probably for a rather long time. We cannot base our military plan on a Christmas withdrawal as we are under far too much pressure. This brings us to Mr. Harriman's point as set forth in the 9:30 meeting yesterday about the need for getting more men. The conclusion we come to is that we need to get more men under arms faster than had been anticipated.

LDS

NOTE: The above meeting was to consider the Department's line at the meeting with the JCS this afternoon.